

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE DANCE.

There are some things which a Christian must not do because they are sinful in themselves; there are some which he must not do because they tend to evil; there are others which he must not do because, while they may not injure him, they will injure others.

Almost all Christians agree that some forms of dancing are wrong in themselves. But let us leave out of consideration the question whether dancing is wrong in itself, and see whether upon other grounds it is right for the Christian to engage in the modern dance in any form.

I. God in His holy word lays down but one code of morals for the government of His people, and all Christians are to regulate their conduct by this one code, regardless of their position; there is one law for pastor and people.

Few, if any, congregations would be willing for their pastor to dance; and were he to do so they would consider that he had committed a great wrong, and had done the church and the cause of Christ much injury.

But some one says: "The pastor must be better than others, for he has to set an example to the flock." But God does not require an example to be set which he does not require to be followed by those for whom it is set.

In 1 Peter 1:15, 16, we read: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Thus we see that God measures the holiness which He requires of each one, not by that of another, but by His own holiness. It will not do, then, for any one to say God enjoins upon His pastor a higher degree of holiness than upon himself. If it is wrong for the pastor to dance, it is wrong for the private member.

II. The history of any church or congregation shows that the Christian who habitually engages in dancing is not a soul-winning Christian. The command is, "Let him that heareth say, Come." (Rev. 22:17.) That is, every one who has heard the gospel call is to repeat it, so that others may be led to Christ. The dancing Christian does not endeavor by earnest personal effort to lead souls to the Saviour. Look among those of your own acquaintance and see. The soul-winning Christians are not found among the dancers.

Christian, do you want your crown to glisten with bright jewels, the souls of those who by your instrumentality have been led to Christ? Or are you willing to meet your Saviour empty handed?

Leave the dance, and do the work of the Master, and receive the reward.

III. Every branch of the Christian church has condemned dancing and warned its members against its evils. Is not the united voice of the whole church entitled to some deference? "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13:17.)

Your church condemns dancing not because it desires to deprive you of any pleasure or to restrict your rights, but because it watches for your soul as one that must give account; and if this duty has been faithfully performed the account can be rendered with joy, and its faithfulness will be profitable for you.

You have no right to remain in any organization and do that which it condemns as against its principles, and which it says is the cause of injury to itself.

Most branches of the church have not laid down any law of discipline on this subject; nor

have they done so in regard to stealing, cursing or murder. The church lays down general principles, by which each special case is to be determined.

IV. And further: the world says the Christian who dances is not living a consistent life. No Christian has a right to do that which will injure his influence over the unconverted. It is the consistent life that exerts an influence for good: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16.)

Even supposing that there be no harm in dancing, if it interferes with the Christian's doing good to his fellow-men, it must be given up. Paul says that even what is lawful must be given up when it becomes an offence or cause of stumbling to others. "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Cor. 8:13.)

The sinner convicted of sin and seeking for salvation does not go to the dancing Christian to be led by him into the way of life.

The dying sinner does not send for a dancing Christian to come and pray with and for him that God may have mercy upon him and save his soul even at the eleventh hour.

Nor does the dying Christian, whose heart is troubled, and who feels the need of sympathy, comfort and encouragement, select a dancing Christian to sit by his bedside during those last moments in which the soul is being prepared for its immediate entrance into heaven.

Looking at these plain matter-of-fact considerations, is it right, my Christian friend, for you to dance?

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17). And where is separation between the church and the world more needed?

V. There are some Christians who, although they do not dance themselves, countenance it in others. It is an old axiom of law that he who aids or encourages another in wrongdoing is himself a participant in the crime and a sharer of the guilt.

The Christian who does not dance, but allows dancing in his house, or permits his children to dance, or attends a dance "just to look on," as he says, is aiding and encouraging others to do that which he feels it would be wrong for him to do himself. If dancing is wrong, you do wrong in encouraging it even by your presence.

"And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her (i. e., Babylon, the world as the enemy of the church), my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4.)

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord: and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3.)

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING.

Many men are on the lookout to get something in this world for nothing. The secret of every prospector in the uninhabited recesses of the earth is the alluring hope of finding some great treasure for which he gives no adequate return. The prompting motive of every speculator in stocks is that by a rise in the market, with which he has nothing

to do, he may acquire riches for which he labors not. The dominating purpose of every shabby workman, doing his job carelessly, is to get wages without the equivalent of work.

This seems to be a dominant feature in human nature. Recently a test was made. A man sent fifty one dollar bills to as many persons, addressing them by mistake, and found that only an average of two or three, out of five, returned the money that did not belong to them. The remainder kept the dollar as a find, something gained by no labor incurred.

This is a striking feature in Church work. Many Christians imagine the kingdom of God was created for their leisurely interests. They do not lift one hand to promote its affairs. They begrudge the few dollars painfully extracted from them by the deacons. They take all the inestimable benefits of a Christian community without one feeling of responsibility to their own neighborhood, or the world at large. The water of life is free, and they intend that some one else shall pay for the pitcher.

Yet even wicked men recognize the value of the church to the community. One in a pastorate, with which we were familiar, was the largest contributor to the expenses of the church, though he rarely entered its doors, when one spoke to him and said, "You do not get the worth of your money." He replied promptly, "Yes I do. I have lived in a community where there were no Christians, and no preaching of the gospel, and I vowed I would support the church if I ever had a chance to do so." This peculiar disease—shall we call it something-for-nothing-itis—is very prevalent in churches. Many a one has it to a sad extent, and the case is incurable apparently. This church has a two thousand dollar preacher, but is starving him to death on eight hundred dollars. They are getting a large part of their Christian training for which they give no return at all.

The Bible is very clear about this. Paul never for a moment allowed men to think that ministers or gospel teachers were mendicants. You do not even muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. The laborer is worthy of his hire was spoken of ministers, not bricklayers. Too often the Church has "sponged on" the ministry and the world, until it is often considered by men of the world as an object of charity. Is it not time that we were insisting that as ministers and churches have given spiritual things, it is but a small thing if they receive a due portion of carnal things? And instead of raising the pastor's salary as a matter of love, it should be largely raised as a matter of right. We know well one pastor who, being offered a raise of three hundred dollars, refused it on the ground that the church should pay off its debts to the world first.

The Church should say to the world, "We are no beggars, here by the sufferance of your scornful charity. We are here giving you an immense return for your dole."

God does not deal with us this way. He gives royally in response to the simplest act of loving service. A woman breaks an alabaster box of precious ointment at the feet of the Master. Her name goes sounding down the ages, and deep upon her soul is the smile of a grateful Lord. Peter cries to the desponding soul of Jesus, "Lord, to whom should we go, thou hast the words of eternal life"; and Jesus takes him into the glory of the transfiguration, and into the diviner glory of Gethsemane.

No disciple of Jesus ever gave anything of worship or service to him that he did not find